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Reorganizing working time through the four-day working week: an analysis of enterprise experiences in Spain

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to analyze 10 organizational experiences in Spain that have implemented a reduction in the weekly working hours – either full or partial – through a four-day working week, without a reduction in salary, exploring motivations, applied models and organizational impacts from a management perspective.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with human resources managers, general managers and executive teams from organizations in various sectors (including technology, industry, education and hospitality) across six Spanish autonomous communities. The analysis focused on identifying common patterns in the motivations for adoption, implementation approaches and perceived organizational effects. The motivations combined work-life balance objectives, social responsibility considerations and talent attraction and retention strategies. Different implementation models were observed, including daily reductions in working hours, the elimination of Friday work and rotating shift systems adapted to specific operational requirements.

Findings – The findings indicate that the primary motivations for adopting a four-day workweek were improving work-life balance, strengthening talent attraction and retention and increasing organizational efficiency. Organizations considering a four-day workweek should adapt implementation models to sectoral characteristics, establish clear performance indicators and promote ongoing evaluation processes to monitor organizational and employee outcomes.

Originality/value – The study provides empirical evidence in the Spanish context, challenging the paradigm that links productivity with the number of hours worked and filling a significant gap in the literature.

Keywords Four-day working week, Flexibility, Spain, Productivity, Organizational models, Work schedules

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction: Spanish context

The transformation of working time has emerged as one of the central debates in the redesign of the contemporary labor model. Among the most innovative proposals, the four-day working week has gained relevance in both academic and business circles (Spencer, 2022; Delaney and Casey, 2022; Campbell, 2024; Vandoros, *et al.*, 2025). All authors call for a balance between productivity, competitiveness and social welfare as factors for progress (Álvarez-Pérez, and Fuentes-Bracamontes, 2025), in a society undergoing a revolution due to automation and the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI).

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In Spain, there are initiatives that seek to adapt to the socioeconomic context for both public and private sector workers. For this reason, the process to implement a 35-h workweek in the General State Administration has begun and is expected to be ready by 2026.

The regulation of companies and workers that do not depend on the State is governed by the Workers' Statute and the current legal maximum working week remains at 40 h (Narazani, 2025). However, within the framework of recent labor policy, the Spanish Government has reached an agreement with the main trade unions – Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) – to gradually reduce it to 37.5 h per week by 2025 without any reduction in salary, accompanied by complementary measures such as digital time recording and the right to disconnect from work (Narazani, 2025).

In parallel with the regulatory framework, pilot projects to reduce working hours in private companies have been promoted with institutional support. Of particular note is the call for proposals managed by the Ministry of Industry and Tourism, which in 2024 allocated approximately €530,000 to five industrial SMEs to experiment with models of reduced working hours without reduced wages. The initiative was backed by comparative assessments with international experiences such as those in Iceland, the UK and Portugal (Ministry of Industry and Tourism, 2024). However, in other countries, participation levels were much higher than in Spain.

Based on this, case studies of companies that have adopted the four-day working week in Spain provide a necessary empirical complement to understanding the reality (Jain *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on the four-day working week by addressing three specific gaps. First, it contrasts the abundance of bibliometric reviews and analyses of scientific output (Jain, Chouliara and Blake, 2025) with the scarcity of empirical studies based on real cases of business implementation (Campbell, 2024; Narazani, 2025). Second, most qualitative research focuses on contexts of high institutional maturity with large-scale national pilots (Jain, Chouliara and Blake, 2025), while there is a lack of analysis in countries where implementation depends mainly on autonomous business initiatives, as is the case in Spain (Faim, Proença and Fontinha, 2024; Walker and Fontinha, 2022). Finally, the existing literature focuses predominantly on the perspective of employees, leaving the strategic vision of business decision-makers on motivations, organizational models and practical challenges largely unexplored (Schor, 2021; Oliveira *et al.*, 2025). This study analyzes ten multisectoral cases in Spain that address these gaps through in-depth interviews with managers responsible for implementation.

This paper is structured as follows: first, the introduction, followed by the theoretical framework addressing the main concepts related to the four-day working week and flexible working hours. Next, the methodology is presented, followed by the results, discussion and conclusions detailing the practical implications, the limitations of the study and future lines of research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Reduction in working hours: from the leisure society to the fourth industrial revolution

The reduction in working hours has historically been seen as an indicator of social progress, associated with an increase in leisure time and the redistribution of the fruits of economic growth. Classic authors such as Keynes anticipated that, with increases in productivity, the working week could be drastically reduced to just fifteen hours by 2030 (Spencer, 2022), although these expectations did not materialize in Western economies.

According to Hartman and Weaver (1977), the four-day, 32-h workweek began in the 1950s and it was in the 1970s that academic and political interest in reducing working hours intensified. This led to the spread of the idea of a "leisure society" in the 1960s and 1970s. It

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was predicted that the pattern of reduced working hours experienced in Western societies during the first half of the 20th century would continue indefinitely (Veal, 2018). However, this does not correspond to the reality for most workers.

In the 2020s, the COVID-19 health crisis and the expansion of teleworking reopened the debate, demonstrating that it is possible to reorganise working hours and spaces without any obvious detriment to productivity (Gallego-Gómez, Heredero, and Montes, 2025). The idea of reducing working hours (Walker and Fontinha, 2022) gained prominence with the feeling that it was necessary to prioritize time spent on matters other than work. This shift has coincided with the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by the spread of AI (Kassa and Worku, 2025), robotization and automation, which increase potential productivity but do not necessarily translate into fewer working hours. In this context, the four-day working week emerges as a concrete proposal to redistribute working time and rethink the link between productivity, well-being and the organization of work (Oliveira, *et al.*, 2025).

2.2 Four-day working week and organizational impacts

The literature distinguishes between an actual reduction in working time and simply compressing the working week into fewer days. From a flexible working hours perspective, Hartman and Weaver (1977) define the reduced week as "any agreement on scheduled working days and hours by an organization whereby one or more groups of employees fulfill their work commitment in less than the standard five full days." Recent studies (Venczel, 2024) emphasize that a four-day working week can involve both an effective reduction in hours and an intensification of the workload, with different implications for well-being and productivity.

At the same time, various models of temporary organization have been consolidated: daily reduction of hours while maintaining a five-day work week, elimination of one full day without pay cuts, rotating shifts that ensure continuous coverage and hybrid schemes that combine teleworking, flexible hours and 32–36-h weeks. This diversity of models is supported by academic literature. Renault and Vega-Jiménez (2025) advocate democratizing work environments and understanding work as a space for forming habits such as autonomy, cooperation, and collective deliberation to adopt new reorganizations to what is currently practiced. Based on this, this diversity can be observed in both pilot experiences promoted by governments and in autonomous business initiatives and raising the need to analyze how each specific configuration conditions organizational results. In the case of Spain, the pilot projects promoted by the public administration have so far been limited in number of companies, only five and to a commitment to a 35-h week (Ministry of Industry and Tourism, 2024).

Studies indicate that reductions in working hours, when accompanied by organizational redesigns, do not lead to losses in productivity and may even be associated with better use of working time (Domingos and Gomes, 2025). Outside the academic sphere, there is also interest in this type of working day (Oliveira *et al.*, 2025). In terms of health and well-being, research points to possible benefits in terms of stress, sleep quality and work-life balance, although these effects depend on the sector, the design of the measure and the degree of organizational support (Vandoros, *et al.*, 2025).

However, some authors, such as Spencer (2022), emphasize that the four-day working week can become a distraction from more profound reforms in job quality or lead to an intensification of the pace of work if it is not accompanied by changes in the organization of tasks. Other studies insist that the success of these models depends on organizational cultures based on autonomy, cooperation and participation, as well as the existence of clear metrics for evaluating results (Neumann, *et al.*, 2026). For their part, there are

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studies that call for greater social commitment (Chung, 2022) and it is clear that the adoption of flexible working hours can lead to the stigmatization of workers who adopt them, compared to those who do not.

From a human resource management perspective, the ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) framework provides a useful perspective for interpreting how reorganizing working time can influence organizational outcomes (Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2023; Kaur and Malik, 2025). According to this model, employee performance depends on their skills, motivation and opportunities to participate in organizational processes. In the context of the four-day working week, reducing and reorganizing working time can affect these three dimensions simultaneously. For example, a better work-life balance can increase employee motivation, while greater autonomy and flexible schedules expand opportunities for participation and self-management. At the same time, organizational redesign processes, such as optimizing workflows and eliminating unproductive time, can foster the effective deployment of employee skills. Therefore, the AMO framework suggests that the outcomes associated with reduced working hours are not solely determined by the number of hours worked, but rather by how organizational practices enable employees to perform under the new time arrangements (Obeidat, Mitchell, and Bray, 2016).

Furthermore, the job demands-resources (JD-R) model helps explain how reorganizing working hours can influence employee well-being and performance. This framework posits that job resources, such as autonomy and flexibility, can buffer job demands and increase motivation, while excessive demands can generate stress (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Bakker and Demerouti, 2013). In this context, the four-day working week can function by increasing job resources, although its effects depend on whether the increased workload is managed effectively (Bakker *et al.*, 2023).

Finally, the findings can also be interpreted in relation to the external environment, where companies face challenges associated with customer expectations and perceived availability. This highlights the importance of organizational legitimacy, where authors such as Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that legitimacy increases the survival of organizations depending on the degree of support they receive from their stakeholders (Martín *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, there is a need to balance internal innovation with external acceptance within a broader research framework.

This Figure 1 summarizes the relationships identified in the study. Managerial motivations drive the adoption of different four-day working week models, which, when accompanied by organizational redesign and cultural change, lead to perceived outcomes such as productivity stability, well-being and talent retention. These processes also generate external challenges related to customer expectations and organizational legitimacy.

2.3 The research gap: business experiences in Spain

Systematic reviews of the four-day working week show rapid growth in scientific output, but also highlight significant gaps (Oliveira *et al.*, 2025). A significant proportion of studies focus on contexts with a high degree of institutional maturity in terms of working time policies or on large national pilot projects, while qualitative analyses in SMEs and in countries where the measure is still in its infancy are much less frequent (Venczel, 2024). In the case of Spain, existing research has mainly focused on describing regulatory debates (Vidat, 2023; Narazani, 2025), pilot projects promoted by the administration and arguments for and against reducing working hours (Gimenez-Nadal and Sevilla, 2014; Goñi-Legaz, and Ollo-López, 2015) rather than examining specific organizational experiences in depth.

Furthermore, most studies focus on the effects on employees in specific sectors (Nogues and Tremblay, 2023), leaving the perspective of business decision-makers and comparisons

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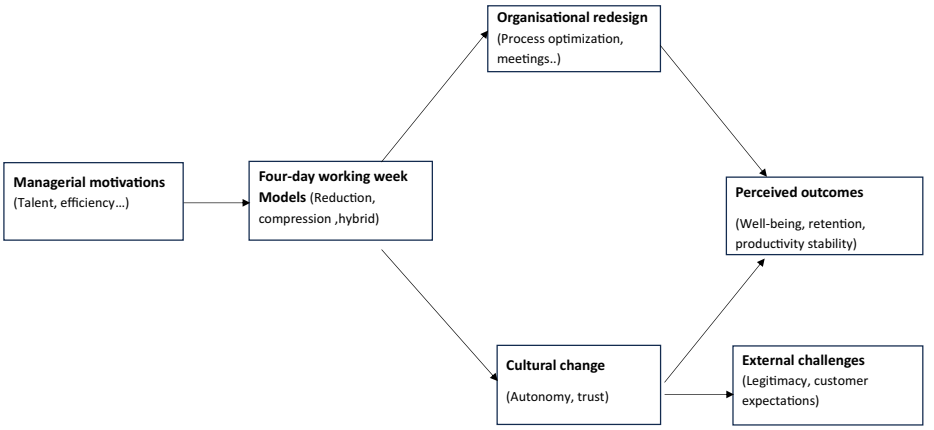


Figure 1. Conceptual model of four-day working week implementation

between implementation models in the background. As a result, relatively little is known about how different types of Spanish companies' design and manage the four-day working week, what motivations they declare, what tools they use to measure productivity and what challenges they encounter in relation to customers, internal organization and culture. This gap justifies the need for qualitative studies that comparatively analyze multiple cases in different sectors and territories, paying simultaneous attention to motivations, implementation models and organizational impacts. In line with this, this paper addresses ten business experiences in Spain that have introduced the four-day working week and/or flexible working hours schemes, with the aim to helping to fill this empirical gap in the literature.

Based on the theoretical framework, the following propositions are formulated to guide the empirical analysis. Given the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study, no hypotheses are proposed in the strict statistical sense:

P1. In a context of low institutional maturity in working time reduction policies, such as in Spain, the implementation of the four-day working week and flexible working hours depends mainly on business initiative and motivations in terms of work-life balance and talent retention.

P2. The perception of stability or improved productivity in companies that implement the four-day working week is associated with organizational models that combine an effective reduction in hours worked with the reorganization of processes (elimination of downtime, review of meetings and shifts), rather than with the compression of the working day into four days in the strict sense.

P3. The sustainability over time of the four-day working week and flexible working hours depends on organizational cultures based on autonomy, trust and employee commitment, alongside the perception of reduced availability to customers.

3. Methodology

Based on the theoretical framework, it can be stated that the overall objective of this study is to analyze how Spanish companies of different sizes and from different sectors design,

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implement and evaluate the four-day working week and other flexible working models, identifying their motivations, the organizational models adopted and the perceived organizational impacts in terms of advantages and disadvantages for the company.

Based on this general objective and to respond to the propositions, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1. What motivations lead Spanish companies to implement the four-day working week and/or other flexible working time models without a reduction in salary?

RQ2. What specific organizational models for reorganizing working time do these companies adopt (e.g. effective reduction of hours, compressed working hours, rotating shifts or hybrid schemes) and how do they adapt to their sectoral contexts?

RQ3. What organizational impacts do managers perceive in terms of productivity, work climate and talent attraction/retention after implementing the four-day working week and flexible working hours?

RQ4. What organizational disadvantages and challenges do companies identify in the implementation and sustainability of these models over time?

3.1 Study design

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach based on a case study design, focusing on the experiences of implementing the four-day working week and other flexible working time models in ten Spanish organizations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with human resources managers, CEOs and executives with direct knowledge of the design, implementation and evaluation of these measures, thus ensuring privileged access to the strategic perspective of senior management. Semi-structured interviews offer a flexible and adaptable approach to data collection, allowing for in-depth analysis of participants' perceptions and experiences (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021).

3.2 Participants

The sample consists of ten Spanish companies out of a total of 19 companies contacted, representing a response rate of 52.6%. The companies were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of sector, organizational size and location, representing real experiences of implementing the four-day working week and flexible working time models (Table 1). The cases cover heterogeneous sectors – from industry and technology to rural hospitality and personalized services – and sizes ranging from micro-enterprises (7 employees) to medium-sized SMEs (up to 200 employees), excluding large corporations to prioritize autonomous initiatives, as Spain is a country where small and medium-sized enterprises make up the majority of its business fabric.

There were two main inclusion criteria: (i) implementation for more than six months, (ii) availability of key managers in the initiative for interviews. The companies are located in six autonomous communities (Basque Country, Galicia, Andalusia, Valencian Community, Asturias, Madrid), covering 78% of the Spanish working population according to Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2025), which ensures relevant territorial representativeness.

Access to the cases was achieved through purposive sampling, detecting cases through studies and web platforms. Based on their publications, the researcher contacted them to invite them to participate in the academic study. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the companies that participated in this study.

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Table 1. Companies participating in the study

Enterprise	Sector of activity	Size	Location
A	Services to businesses	25 employees	País Vasco
B	Services to businesses	10 employees	Galicia
C	Other personal and leisure services	7 employees	Andalucía
D	Information and communications	35 employees	Valencia community
E	Information and communications	>200 employees	Andalucía
F	Other personal and leisure services	9 employees	Asturias
G	Information and communications	24 employees	Valencia community
H	Information and communications	7 employees	País vasco
I	Information and communications	10 employees	Autonomous community of Madrid
J	Other personal and leisure services	7 employees	Autonomous community of Madrid

Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025

3.3 Data collection procedure

Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection technique. After sending an explanatory email detailing the study's objectives, eight interviews were scheduled via videoconference (Microsoft Teams) and two by telephone, all conducted individually with the participants' consent.

The interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed in full using TurboScribe, lasted an average of 40 min (range: 30–60 min) and were conducted between April and September 2025.

3.4 Data analysis

The selected methodology enables the research questions to be addressed by analyzing the content of organizational experiences, identifying patterns, divergences and analytical categories around four main dimensions: (i) motivations for implementation, (ii) organizational models adopted, (iii) perceived organizational impacts and (iv) advantages and disadvantages detected.

Atlas.ti (web version) was used for data processing and analysis, following a sequential process of:

- Open coding: extraction of emerging themes from the complete transcripts.
- Axial coding: thematic grouping by analytical dimensions (motivations, models, impacts, advantages and disadvantages).
- Comparative analysis: identification of common patterns and contextual differences between cases.

This procedure allowed the identification of five main categories of analysis aligned with the research questions. The coding process was iterative and reflective. The initial codes generated during open coding were continuously reviewed and refined during axial coding to ensure consistency with the research questions. The comparative phase allowed for the identification of recurring patterns across different cases, while preserving sectoral and organizational differences. This iterative approach improved the internal consistency of the analytical categories, which were based on detecting common patterns of advantages and disadvantages in implementing the workday.

3.5 Reliability and limitations

To improve the reliability of the qualitative analysis, several strategies were considered. First, transparency in the research design was ensured by using a questionnaire previously

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validated in the literature (Gomes and Fontinha, 2024) and by following the selection, collection and coding procedures. Second, the use of direct quotes from participants supports the interpretation of the findings and provides information on management perspectives.

However, the study also has limitations that must be acknowledged. The analysis is based exclusively on management narratives, which may introduce a positivity bias, especially given that the participating companies had voluntarily adopted the four-day working week and agreed to be interviewed. Furthermore, the lack of triangulation with other data sources – such as internal documents, performance indicators or employee perspectives – limits the ability to validate the reported results.

The sampling strategy is purposive, which can also introduce a selection bias, as companies more willing to share positive experiences are more likely to participate.

Finally, the interpretive nature of qualitative research implies that the researcher plays an active role in data analysis. While efforts were made to maintain rigor and analytical consistency, the possible influence of the researcher's interpretation is acknowledged.

4. Results

The results obtained based on the proposed research questions are presented below. It is important to note that the use of percentages (e.g. 70%, 80%) in the results section serves as an indicative tool to highlight the relative frequency of the themes in the different cases. These figures are not intended to offer a statistical generalization, but rather to improve clarity and facilitate comparison within the small qualitative sample used in this study.

4.1 Motivations for implementation

What motivations lead Spanish companies to implement a four-day working week or other flexible working models without a reduction in salary?

All the companies analyzed identified improving work-life balance as a motivation for implementing a four-day working week or flexible working models. The analysis in Atlas.ti revealed three recurring reasons in order of frequency: (1) work-life balance/well-being emerged across all cases, (2) strategic talent management emerged in most cases and (3) organizational efficiency/sustainability appeared in a smaller group of organizations.

The interviews show that work-life balance emerges as an absolute priority in all sectors: "The people who work with us value that free time more than a high salary" (Manager). Both traditional and digital businesses highlight personal well-being as a lever for retention.

Attracting/retaining talent is the second most cited reason, responding to the shortage of professionals: "It is our key differentiating asset in a highly competitive market for digital profiles" (CEO). This is particularly relevant in knowledge-intensive services or traditional profiles that are becoming extinct, where working conditions can be demanding. In this sense, efficiency/sustainability is the third reason, linked to a reduction in working hours with operational optimization: "We wanted to be a benchmark in workplace sustainability" (director). This includes climate adaptation in regions with the highest rainfall (Galicia, Basque Country) and the reduction of transport emissions. A summary of the above can be seen in Table 2.

4.2 Organizational models

What specific organizational models for reorganizing working time do these companies adopt (e.g. effective reduction of hours, compressed working days, rotating shifts or hybrid schemes) and how do they adapt to their sectoral contexts?

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Table 2. Main motivations by company

Motivations	Sector
Work-life balance	All
Talent	Information and communications, other personal and leisure services
Business efficiency	Information and communications, business services

Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025

The cases analyzed show different patterns of working time reorganization adapted to their sectors. This study identified four main types of working time reorganization, adapted to the operational context of each company. In the majority of cases, approximately half of the organizations, there is an effective reduction in hours (32 h/4 days). In three of the ten cases, there is a compressed workweek (36–40 h/4 days) and all the companies participating in this case provide services directly to customers. In another case, there is a reduced 5-day working week, totaling 25 h per week (company participating in the Ministry of Industry and Tourism program) and another company has adopted rotating/hybrid shifts in a restaurant business.

In short, businesses based on digital services have opted for a reduction to 32 h in 80% of cases in this sector, compared to businesses that provide services to other companies or customers, which have agreed on working hours of 36–40 h. This adaptive heterogeneity shows that multisectoral viability depends on aligning the working hours model with specific operational logic, beyond generic schemes, as can be seen in Table 3.

4.3 Organizational impacts

What organizational impacts do managers perceive in terms of productivity, work environment and talent attraction/retention following the implementation of the four-day working week and flexible working hours?

The adoption of the four-day working week and flexible models has led to common structural changes in the internal management of all companies, regardless of their specific motivations or maturity in implementation. Almost all organizations interviewed reported stability or improvement in productivity, which was systematically associated with process optimization: reorganization of work that reduces downtime and eliminates unnecessary meetings in different sectors of activity. In direct customer service sectors, adjustments were made to shift scheduling in line with peaks in demand and holiday periods, while maintaining operational coverage.

In all cases, improvements in work-life balance were highlighted as the main impact: “The team is more motivated and organized in their personal lives” (founder). Talent

Table 3. Organizational models

Model	Cases	Features
32 h/4 days	5/10	Information and communications
36-40 h/4 days	3/10	Other personal and leisure services
25 h/5 days	1/10	EOI subsidized program
Work shifts	1/10	Available 7 days/week

Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025

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attraction and retention were identified in most cases and several managers stated that: "Candidates choose us over our competitors because of this policy."

At the same time, the measure has reinforced organizational cultures based on autonomy and trust, replacing strict time control with management by objectives: "We have not lost revenue; on the contrary, we have optimized meetings and eliminated downtime" (HR Director, digital company). This transition is particularly marked in companies that are pioneers in adopting new organizational models, where they are already well established compared to experimental cases and we have the experiences of micro-SMEs and medium-sized companies. These findings are consistent with the AMO framework, as greater autonomy and flexibility appear to strengthen motivation and opportunities for employee participation.

4.4 Organizational advantages and disadvantages of adopting flexible working hours and four-day working week

What organizational disadvantages and challenges do companies identify in the implementation and sustainability of these models over time?

The benefits are consistent across all interviews conducted. The reduced working week has had a direct impact on work-life balance, promoting the organization of personal and family time and increasing employee commitment. As one manager pointed out: "The people who work for us value having that time more than a high salary." Likewise, the reduction is perceived as a strategic factor in attracting and retaining talent, particularly in digital marketing and software, where competition for qualified profiles is high and young graduates demand flexible conditions. Finally, companies report that there has been no loss of productivity; on the contrary, they have observed better use of working time and, in some cases, a more positive organizational climate, as none of them want to return to the previous working hours model.

Flexibility is key to ensuring the sustainability of the model, as it allows employees to organize shifts, choose vacation dates, combine remote work with on-site work and adapt their working hours to their personal needs. This not only promotes work-life balance, but also strengthens autonomy and organizational trust. In the words of an executive in the digital sector, "The four-day working week is almost anecdotal: what matters most is autonomy, trust and transparency."

Although the perceived benefits clearly outweigh the limitations, companies point to significant challenges to consolidating the model, as shown in Table 4. The most common challenge is the perception of reduced availability to customers – the majority of organizations – especially in industrial and direct service sectors, which forces managers to intensify communication and negotiation to maintain commercial trust. Likewise, several organizations highlight the lack of formal metrics to objectively assess the impact on productivity, making it difficult to both report to shareholders and legitimize the measure internally.

Table 4. Main current disadvantages

Challenge	Cases	Features
Customer perception	7/10	Industry, customer services
Lack of formal metrics	6/10	Microenterprises
Increased workload	4/10	Information and communications, other personal and leisure services
Shift coordination	2/10	Other personal and leisure services

Source(s): Own elaboration, 2025

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On the other hand, a smaller group of organizations reported initial adaptation difficulties linked to the concentration of the workload in fewer days and the need to develop greater time management skills. These tensions tended to ease after a period of organizational adjustment lasting between six and twelve months.

Overall, although these challenges do not call into question the viability of the model, its active management – through external communication strategies, the definition of performance indicators and the strengthening of organizational autonomy – is seen by managers as a determining factor for its long-term sustainability. From a JD-R perspective, these challenges may represent additional job demands that require adequate organizational resources to avoid work intensification.

5. Discussion

The results of this study are consistent with recent contributions such as those by Spencer (2022), Schor (2021) and Chung (2022), who warn that the four-day working week should not be analyzed solely as a technical adjustment to working hours, but rather as an organizational transformation. The findings extend the AMO framework by highlighting that the "opportunity" dimension is not only shaped by formal HR practices, but also by temporal restructuring and organizational redesign processes. Similarly, from a JD-R perspective, the results suggest that increased autonomy associated with reduced working time can function as a key job resource, but only when not offset by workload intensification.

In line with the gaps identified by Venczel (2024) and Faim, Proença and Fontinha (2024) regarding contexts of low institutional maturity, the findings confirm Proposition 1: in Spain, implementation depends fundamentally on entrepreneurial initiative. Unlike the structured trials analyzed by Schor (2021) or Walker and Fontinha (2022), the companies analyzed act as organizational agents that introduce changes without a consolidated regulatory framework. In this sense, the reduction of working hours is framed more as a competitive strategy (Delaney and Casey, 2022) than as a consolidated public policy. Likewise, work-life balance appears as a cross-cutting motivation, consistent with the findings of Chung (2022), but strategically linked to attracting and retaining talent in digital sectors.

In line with Spencer's warnings (2022), the results show that productivity improvements do not automatically result from reduced working hours, but rather from the accompanying organizational redesign. As Venczel (2024) emphasizes, the distinction between effective reduction and compression of working hours is crucial. In the cases analyzed, stability or productivity improvement coincides with internal reorganization processes, the elimination of unproductive time and a transition to management by objectives, in line with Domingos and Gomes (2025) regarding models based on trust and cooperation. Thus, the four-day working week acts as a catalyst for organizational modernization, rather than a simple temporary reduction.

The aim is to shift cultures away from face-to-face interaction toward results-oriented models that enable the sustainability of the model, as indicated in Proposition 3. In this regard, there are challenges such as the perception of reduced availability to customers. This element introduces a dimension that has been little explored in the literature: the tension between internal organizational innovation and external legitimacy in traditional markets, which connects with Chung's (2022) warnings about possible stigmatization effects in flexible schemes, which can intensify if not accompanied by adequate organizational redesign (Spencer, 2022). Likewise, the absence of formal metrics in these companies reveals a gap between subjective perceptions of improvement and the ability to evaluate

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objectively. This framework allows us to recontextualize the normative debate; the multisectoral viability observed indicates that the main obstacle is not technical, but cultural.

6. Conclusions

This study has analyzed ten business experiences involving the implementation of a four-day working week and other models for reorganizing working time in Spain. The results show that, in a context of low institutional maturity, the adoption of these models depends fundamentally on the strategic initiative of the companies themselves and is mainly articulated as a means of promoting work-life balance and talent management initiatives rather than as a response to regulations.

One of the most relevant findings is that stability or improvement in productivity is not associated with reduced working hours, but rather with the organizational redesign that accompanies it. Companies that have consolidated the model have transformed internal processes, eliminated unproductive time and transitioned to cultures based on autonomy, trust and results orientation. Thus, the four-day working week acts as a catalyst for organizational modernization rather than a simple temporary adjustment. However, the study also identifies challenges such as the perception of reduced availability to customers, which is the main challenge to the external legitimacy of the model. Likewise, the absence of formal metrics limits the ability to objectively assess impacts and consolidate long-term sustainability. These elements suggest that the viability of the model does not depend exclusively on its internal design, but on its articulation with the environment, because the success of reducing working time does not lie solely in working fewer hours, but in how organizations redefine their structures, cultures and external relationships in the process.

One of the main practical limitations of the study is the sample size, as not all of Spain's autonomous communities are represented due to a lack of case studies, which could lead to potential bias. Furthermore, although sectoral heterogeneity enriches the comparative analysis, it makes it difficult to generalize the results. In addition, the exclusive reliance on managerial perspectives prevents comparison with employee experiences, which may differ and limits the ability to fully assess organizational impacts.

In terms of the practical implications of this study, the results show that the four-day working week cannot be applied as a one-size-fits-all solution. Each sector must design a flexible model: intensified working hours, adapted shifts, project-based objectives or reduced 32-h weeks. In addition, the findings suggest that the viability of the model depends less on the reduction in working hours itself and more on support in management by objectives, performance measurement and communication with the environment, offering concrete guidance for companies and consultants in pilot programs. From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that successful implementation requires: (i) the definition of clear performance indicators, (ii) the redesign of internal processes, particularly meetings and workflows, (iii) the alignment between the working time model and the sector's operational needs and (iv) active communication with clients to manage expectations regarding availability. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as management's perceptions, rather than as objective measures of organizational performance.

From a public policy perspective, the results indicate that, in contexts of low institutional maturity, such as Spain, institutional support mechanisms could facilitate adoption by reducing uncertainty and promoting the development of organizational capacities.

In terms of academic contribution, this study contributes to the literature on working time reduction by showing that the four-day work week, in contexts of low institutional maturity, does not operate as an isolated variable but as a process of organizational transformation mediated by culture, internal redesign and external legitimacy management.

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Methodologically, it expands the multisectoral qualitative evidence from the strategic perspective of business management, an angle that has yet to be explored in the Spanish case and this represents a relevant empirical contribution to the existing literature. This study contributes to the literature by providing additional empirical evidence from the Spanish context.

Future research could delve deeper into longitudinal studies that evaluate the evolution of these models over time, incorporate the perspective of employees to contrast managerial narratives and develop international comparisons with countries with similar institutional characteristics. It is also relevant to analyze implementation in the public sector and in companies benefiting from publicly funded pilot programs, to evaluate possible differences in motivations, design and results. In addition, future research should incorporate data from multiple sources, including employee perspectives and objective performance indicators, to validate and expand upon these findings.

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